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JAPAN REVISITED AFTER THIRTY YEARS

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In 1881 I left Japan after having enjoyed several delightful years of residence there, under conditions favorable to the acquisition of a fairly good knowledge of the character, disposition and spirit of the Japanese people. While at that time nearly all foreigners, including missionaries as well as those engaged in trade or commerce, were restricted as to their residence to localities set apart for them by the government, exception was made in favor of foreign professors employed in the University who were practically free to live and travel where they liked.

In 1911 I returned to Japan for a stay of nearly three months, during every hour of which I was busy in the discovery of evidences of the wonderful transformation that these thirty years have wrought.

Curiously, yet naturally it was not the tall chimneys, the extensive manufacturing establishments, or the big steamships carrying the flag of Japan that first attracted attention and drew forth exclamations of surprise. One was prepared for that sort of thing, by personal knowledge of small beginnings long ago, by uninterrupted correspondence with Japanese friends, and by any one of the scores of books about Japan that have been printed in the past decade, many of the authors of which have, apparently, seen little else. It was the comparatively trivial, especially the things *not* seen, that caused wonder on first going ashore at Nagasaki. What had become of the "queue," the "top-knot" or small tuft of tied-up hair that partially covered the shaven top of every Japanese head? Gone, absolutely! Not one was to be seen in Nagasaki, Osaka, Kyoto, Tokyo or other city, except on the head of an actor and then it was soon dis-

covered to be part of a wig. In the country one or two were found, the insignia of ultra-conservatism! The absence of the queue was made up for by the presence of the *hat* on the head of nearly every man and boy, where formerly the habit of hat-wearing was so rare that hats were constantly being found where last deposited by the owners, who had gone off without ever "missing" them. Shoes of the western model have become nearly as necessary a part of a man's dress as the western hat and the number of men who clothe themselves completely after the western fashion is now so great that they have long since ceased to attract special attention.

Few things in Japan have been so fixed and unalterable as the fashion in woman's dress. While the material of which it is composed may range from the poor and cheap to the rich, costly and exquisitely beautiful, the "model" has been practically the same for centuries. But even in this a very considerable change has somehow been brought about and it is especially noticeable in the style of hair dressing now all but universal among Japanese ladies. The new style is vastly less complicated and difficult, and hence less costly than the old. It is not very unlike some of the fashions recently in vogue among the western people and to the general European taste is more artistic and beautiful than the elaborate coiffure which so long prevailed. There are many indications of a tendency to change other long established features of the costume of Japanese women and it does not seem rash to predict the abolition of the *Obi*, the tremendously large, heavy and often very expensive girdle, with its enormous "bow" in the back with which a Japanese lady encircles her waist and which, in the eyes of most foreigners detracts so much from the grace of her movements. To abandon this classic feature of woman's dress at once would be little short of a revolution, but already it has disappeared from the authorized and generally prescribed outfit of young women and girls at school who now dress in a very attractive style, uniform in model with charming variations in color according to the taste of the wearer. Twenty-five and thirty years ago there was a pronounced leaning towards European models of dress among Japanese ladies which now, happily,

seems to have quite disappeared. At present this fashion is so rare among them that while a man may travel about the country in European dress without causing the slightest remark, a woman clothed as she would be in Europe or America is immediately surrounded by a horde of the curious of both sexes and all ages, to whom her dress is a great novelty.

In contrast with the condition of thirty years ago the quantity and variety of foreign goods of all kinds offered for sale in the shops have enormously increased. "Made in Germany" is to be read on countless articles in every Japanese city and town and the market for even some of the widely known specialties of Japan has been invaded at home by foreign competitors, and this in spite of the very high import duty that prevails. In porcelain for ordinary use the German combination of cheapness and fairly good quality has led to pretty large importations. One may search in vain in the shops of today for many articles of domestic use and ornament which a generation ago might be found everywhere but which have now disappeared, in many instances because in these things the skilful hand and artistic eye can no longer compete with machinery in the production of articles perhaps less beautiful, but really more useful and satisfactory. Occasionally one discovers that a once highly valued and profitable business or profession has been completely wiped out. Thirty years ago the beautiful metallic mirrors then universally in use among the Japanese could be bought on every street. Mirror casting, grinding and polishing was an art demanding much skill and mirror making was a business that had descended from father to son for many generations. But the superiority of the silvered glass mirror was immediately recognized and now one may search in vain in all the great cities for a shop in which metallic mirrors are offered for sale and the guild of mirror makers is extinct. The metal mirror is one of the "Sacred treasures" of Japan and is always to be found in a place of distinction in Shinto and also in many Buddhist temples. When I asked where were the men who repolished these temple mirrors and supplied new ones when required,

the completeness of the extinction of the profession of mirror making was impressed upon me by the reply that what little there was to be done in that line in these days had been relegated to the umbrella menders!

Attention was soon drawn to the increase in the consumption of foreign foodstuffs or rather of foods that were entirely foreign to the Japanese *menu* of thirty years ago, such as milk, butter, beef, and even cheese. European forms of cakes and confectionery are imitated and, although much sought after, not a single example of the Japanese *Compato*, a favorite confection of former years, could be found.

Such examples of changes in social customs or domestic habits might be multiplied indefinitely, though to many they will appear of minor importance and perhaps too much space has already been given them. By the thoughtful student of the evolution of the Japanese, however, they will not seem to be trivial for they point clearly to that most remarkable characteristic of the people, a facility for readjustment of both external and internal relations, whenever a better adaptation to their environment is secured thereby. What nation in all the history of the world has shown a larger wisdom in the treatment of important domestic affairs than have the Japanese in their management of the perplexing problems of national costume? Immediately after the wars of the restoration the superior advantages of the modern uniform for soldiers was recognized and it was promptly adopted by the new régime. As soon as the educated men of the nation began to engage in various professional and business occupations the great advantage of western costume over the old for such occupations became evident and its use is rapidly becoming universal. On the other hand the unhealthfulness, the costly fickleness and (a Japanese would add) the indecency of modern European dress for women, has been proved by observation and experiment and it is practically rejected by all save the few whose attendance at court or residence abroad makes them unwilling victims. It will be generally conceded that the dress worn by women in Japan is infinitely more "becoming" to them than the models of Paris; it is infinitely less harmful to the health of the wearer

and from an economic standpoint has the enormous advantage of a practically invariable style. Every garment may be worn until it has done full service and yet there is ample room for display of taste and individual preference through variation in color and character or quality of the material used.

Of the bigger and greater transformations in Japan and especially in Japanese cities so much has been said and written that it is not worth while in this place to attempt any catalogue or detailed description of them though it ought to be said that only those who are familiar with former conditions can appreciate their magnitude. In the large cities and particularly in the capital, much has been done to modernize and adapt the streets and principal buildings to the requirements of the new life. Thousands of houses have been bought or confiscated and destroyed to make beautifully straight and well graded streets from sixty to one hundred feet in width, with twenty or thirty-foot sidewalks, where, before, two narrow carts might have difficulty in passing, and sidewalks for foot passengers were absolutely unknown.

Electric tramways go in all directions and (I am speaking of the capital) some of the tracks are elevated above the street as in many American cities. These modern methods of transportation have been well-nigh fatal to the picturesque jinrikisha with its swift and graceful runner, for in spite of the very considerable increase in the population along with an enormous increase in the business activity of Tokyo, the number of jinrikisha men is only ten to twenty per cent of that of the early days, and the cost of employing them is correspondingly greater.

Much money and great engineering skill have been devoted to the improvement in water supply, to the establishment of drainage and the sanitary condition of cities has been greatly improved. The Japanese have demonstrated in many ways that they are quite abreast of the times in all matters relating to sanitation, hygiene and the control of epidemic or contagious diseases. Most of the streets are well lighted at night, the more important being quite bril-

liant with a display of electric lighting and electric advertising. There are several fine, new theatres where, until the curtain goes up, one might easily imagine oneself in Paris or Berlin, though behind the curtain, in most cases, all is still Japanese. Many innovations, however, have been made in the theatre in the last thirty years, one of the most interesting being the introduction of female actors upon the Japanese stage. Western plays are now frequently put on and during one week of my stay in Tokyo there was a decided "run" on the box office of the leading play house, *Hamlet*, translated into Japanese, being the attraction.

Few things were more astonishing than the growth during the past forty years of a taste for "foreign" music. In no other respect did the civilization of Japan differ from that of Europe so much as in its music which, through centuries of assiduous cultivation, has become a highly developed and complete system, oriental in its general character, yet distinctly national. It seemed at first that there could be no possible way of bridging over the chasm that yawned between Japanese and European music, the difference being everywhere so great as to make them mutually exclusive. But the remarkable flexibility of the Japanese mind is illustrated by the fact that while few, very few Europeans, even those of long residence, ever *understand* Japanese music well enough to become really fond of it, hundreds of thousands of Japanese find great pleasure in the works of Beethoven, Handel and Wagner. It must not be assumed that this is due to the innate superiority of western music. Their own still holds first place in the hearts of all the music loving people and some of them who are capable of thoroughly understanding and enjoying both systems, sturdily maintain that it possesses certain qualities and characteristics of such excellence that it will have a large contributory influence in the evolution of the "music of the future" and must be reckoned with accordingly. Not only is the music of the great composers listened to with pleasure by the Japanese, but it is reproduced, often in an almost faultless manner. A special "school of music" is supported by the government, managed by competent European direc-

tors and employing skilful foreign teachers. In the recitals given by this school, as well as by others not connected with it, one may hear really fine orchestral performances with excellent chorus singing and occasional violin or piano solos that would be a credit to any concert stage in America.

Time will not allow more than the mere mention of the more noticeable, and to the casual observer the more impressive evidences of the extraordinary advances made by this wonderful people during the past thirty years;—their merchant fleet which carries the flag of the Rising Sun to all quarters of the globe; their great commercial and manufacturing activities; their shipbuilding; their cotton spinning; their big establishments for the manufacture of electric appliances; their mines and mining; their fine system of railways, extending from one end of the country to the other and many other things all of which were unknown in the earlier day.

In Osaka I spent a number of pleasant hours in examining one of the most recently built cotton mills in which about twelve hundred people are employed. Attached to it is a hospital with several professional nurses and a physician in constant attendance. All of the employees had at least one meal each day in the establishment for which purpose there was provided a large and comfortable dining room where a thousand or more might be served at once, the food, of excellent quality, being prepared by a competent chef with his corps of assistants. For many who spent practically all of their time inside of the gates there was provided a large amusement room and lecture hall in which a great variety of entertainments were given from time to time. Indeed I do not believe the most advanced of American or English cotton mills go further than this in the exercise of care for the health, comfort and pleasure of their employees. This mill was one of a recently formed "trust" or "merger" of ten of about the same size and character. Corporations and combinations are quite as well known in Japan as elsewhere and even the "big department store" is found in large cities.

Of advances in educational matters it is hardly necessary to speak at length. The intelligent public has already been enlightened on that subject through the interesting addresses recently given in America and in England by Baron Kikuchi, formerly Minister of Education and now President of the Imperial University at Kyoto and by the exhaustive treatise on "Education in Japan" which he has recently published.

The one institution of University rank has multiplied into four "Imperial Universities" and the demand for higher education is so great that there is a large overflow of students into well organized and well managed colleges maintained by private endowment. In the Imperial Universities the standards of admission and graduation are as high as in any other part of the world, the most rigorous tests of scholarship being applied. Nearly all the more important work in the various professions and in the civil life of the country is done by graduates of these institutions. In a few years the exceptions will be very rare and I doubt if there is another country in the world in which the University plays so large a part. Professors in these great schools, in addition to their regular work as teachers, are, for the most part, actively engaged in original research along the principal lines of scientific investigation. An Active National Academy exists, scientific publications are numerous and the work of men of science in Japan has long ago commanded the respect and admiration of the world. Primary and secondary schools have made fully as much progress as those of higher rank; teachers are trained in excellent normal schools; the most improved methods of instruction are used and the substantially built, comfortable and admirably planned school buildings were a delightful surprise.

Newspapers have greatly increased both in number and in influence. Many of them have very large circulations and are well edited, though some of them are by no means free from the vices so glaringly evident and so profoundly regrettable in the great majority of American and European journals. There are several excellent daily newspapers printed in the English language, some of which are managed and edited entirely by Japanese.

One of the most interesting changes noted, of which there was much evidence everywhere, and one not quite easy to account for was what seemed to be a sort of revival or recrudescence of Buddhism. In many of the old temples there were marked evidences of prosperity; repairs, restorations, improvements and additions were common. And there were new temples, some of them larger and more costly than ever before erected. Millions of dollars had been expended in the construction of one magnificent shrine in Kyoto, of immense size and great beauty, satisfactory proof of the fact that the skill and artistic taste for which the old builders were famous has not been lost. These newer structures were the result of voluntary contributions from members of a sect which might be said to represent a more liberal and enlightened Buddhism which seems to have become extremely popular in recent years. In considering the religious faith of the Japanese it is necessary to remember that Buddhism is a religion of many sects, differing from each other as widely as the various sects of Christianity. The Buddhism of Ceylon, of Burmah or of China is not the Buddhism of Japan, nor is the Buddhism of five hundred years ago that of today, any more than the Christianity of the Middle Ages is that of today. More than one of the most noted European and American scholars who have lived long in Japan have publically espoused Buddhism.

At every hand are seen evidences of the general prosperity of the Japanese at the present time. A visitor, returning after thirty years is struck by the absence of *beggars* from highways, public places, and many localities about which, in former times, they literally swarmed. This is probably not to be attributed to the entire absence of poverty but in large degree to the energetic measures of the government for the suppression of the vice, along with enlarged and improved public charities. One is tempted to start an inquiry concerning this prosperity, as to whether the individual as well as the nation is enjoying it;—for taxes are extremely high, the “cost of living” has more than doubled and the tariff on imported goods is in many cases so heavy as to seem pro-

hibitory, all of which is a natural and necessary result of the two great wars in which Japan has been engaged within the past fifteen years. Yet in not a single instance did I hear what could justly be called a *complaint* against the excessive taxation though it is evidently a heavy burden upon all classes.

Much has been said and written about the *patriotism* of the Japanese and, indeed, this element of their character is so highly developed that the word seems to take on a new meaning when applied to them. Their loyalty to their ruler is a universally accepted religion. Nothing is left undone to cultivate this sentiment and to create a pride in their country's achievements. Even the hasty traveller must be impressed by the display in all quarters of relics of the victorious engagements of the army and navy in the recent war with Russia. In almost every public place in town or country, in temples, schoolhouses and grounds, in the University, public museum, palaces and parks, there may be seen immense cannon, parts of captured ships, steam boilers, locomotives, small arms of all kinds, each with an inscription relating the story of its capture. One is forcibly reminded of the practice of the Roman Republic in displaying the beaks of captured ships upon its first great rostrum, thus decorating and naming it forever. One of the most curious and interesting of the relics of the war is a huge ship taken from the Russians, now anchored in the Bay of Yedo and enjoying considerable vogue as a restaurant and place of popular resort.

Of the unselfish devotion of the Japanese soldiers and sailors, their courage and prowess nothing need be said. Against heavy odds they have proved them to the satisfaction of a not too credulous world. And it is important to note that there was no field of Rugby or Eton on which these victories were won. The Japanese are not an athletic people in the usual American or English meaning of the word. Students in the Imperial Universities *do not play foot-ball*, considering it not quite in harmony with the dignity and serious nature of the work in which they are engaged. It

would, indeed, be near the truth to say that the victories of Japan were won *in* the school and university but *not* on the play ground. They were victories of brain rather than brawn.

In spite of all one sees and hears no careful and disinterested observer can consider the Japanese a war-like people. As individuals they are most peaceful in disposition. In no other country in the world have I seen so little "physical conflict" among men. Even when under the influence of *sake* their quarrels are generally light, harmless and evanescent.

But when war is forced upon them, as they believe it to have been in their most recent conflict, in the defence of their emperor, their country or the honor of their nation, they fight as few fight in these modern days.

Within the past few years there has been much wild and foolish talk among Americans in which it is declared or assumed that the Japanese, both Government and people, are anxious to go to war with the United States. Much of this has originated, it is said, among a class whose professional advancement can only be greatly accelerated by inducing their own country to engage in battle with another. In my judgment nothing could easily be further from the truth. It might almost be said that it is the one thing above all others that they wish to avoid. That they have more than one good reason for feeling that the "square deal" has not always been accorded them by us, cannot be denied. Nor can it be denied that they have treated each delicate situation as it arose with infinite patience and tact; there has been no bluff, bluster or arrogance but at every turn they have shown their earnest desire to maintain friendly relations with us, even when considerable sacrifices have been necessary. Unfortunately as a people we are too busily engaged in the activities of trade and commerce to give much consideration to questions that do not immediately affect those activities, forgetting today what we said and did yesterday and giving no thought to what we shall say or do tomorrow. We accept the false and reject the true with equal readiness

and are thus always in danger of being led into situations from which it will be difficult to extricate ourselves. In view of our rapidly growing interests in the East it is important for us to realize that there is no nation in the world whose feeling for us today is more *genuinely friendly* than that of Japan. It will be an everlasting disgrace if we strain that friendly feeling beyond its elastic limit by yielding to the senseless clamor of a very small minority of our own people who are either ignorant or corrupt.